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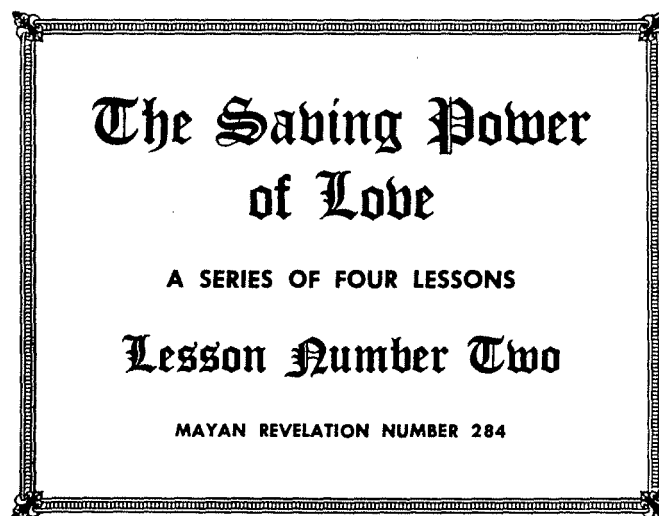
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Learning To Generously Give Love

Possessive Love is Selfish

What Happens When Love is "Blind"?

Genuine Love Sets Us Free

Love Generously — Live Expansively

**Love Warped by Indulgence
Makes Men Shiftless**

Affirmation



Beloved Perfector:

In our last Lesson we learned of the power that comes into our lives when we accept the love that God, our Father, is waiting to bestow upon us. To know the love of God is an uplifting experience. It prompts us to be generous and kind, to be patient and strong, to be happy and content.

When our hearts are filled with genuine love, we reach out to shield and honor those about us in the same way that God reaches out to us. We receive strength to forgive the erring one, as the father forgave the Prodigal Son. We have no desire to "get even", or to give others only what they deserve, for love

prompts us to give to each one according to his needs.

Unfortunately human love does not always measure up to divine standards. By endangering her good reputation a young man may hurt the girl he is trying to woo. By saying, "If you loved me you would grant my wish," a wife may torment her husband. By smothering her son with protection and kisses - which she calls by the name of "love" - a mother may upset her child's emotional balance and ruin his ability to become a responsible adult.

True love is more than an erotic feeling. An emotion that is not controlled by honest concern for the welfare of others can injure those who are closest to us, crippling their minds, thwarting their aims, and making them unfit to grapple with the challenges they must face.

Furthermore, when our love is dominated by selfish desires we become unlovable. We become so possessive that we drive from us those whom we earnestly desire to hold close.

This Lesson will help you to distinguish between the God-like love that can answer your deepest needs and the counterfeit love that could only rob you of the affection you seek. It will picture unfortunate manifestations of love that you are wise to avoid; and it will show how you can gain supreme happiness by generously giving true, unselfish love.

Approach this Lesson by earnestly praying:

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, Open my mind so I may clearly see the difference between fleeting love and the love that endures. Guide me today in all I say and do. Show me how to give the kind of love that makes life beautiful. Help me to so live that I will be worthy of the lasting affection and esteem of my family and friends. In Jesus' name, Amen.



POSSESSIVE LOVE IS SELFISH

Victor Hugo wrote: "The supreme happiness in life is the conviction that we are loved." Everyone longs to be appreciated and loved.

Various methods are used in the endeavor to make one's self appear lovable. Women lavish care upon their bodies, their hair, and their dress. Men strive for physical prowess, or for financial success.

In our eagerness to be loved there is danger that we may become too absorbed in ourselves and our own longings. When this happens we unconsciously seek to gratify our own desires, even at the expense of the welfare of those whom we profess to hold dear.

Think of the woman who used her physical attractiveness to win the man of her choice. She thought he was going to give her a fine home, a car, and other luxuries. When her husband failed to receive the expected promotion, and the couple had to struggle to pay their rent, she began nagging him. She had loved him for what she could get. So when she was disappointed, her love ebbed away.

An unhappy marriage can be saved from collapse when both husband and wife cease to demand evidences of love. Bridges of understanding are built as they seek ways to show Christ-like concern and patience.

Never attempt to dominate and control your mate. This would poison your relationship. Belonging to each other is sweet and beautiful only as long as it is tempered by tenderness and generosity.

Romantic love soon dies if it is based upon selfish desires. Happiness comes not as you succeed in getting what you want, but as you strive to give to the one you call "sweetheart" all that will contribute to his or her well-being. The same principle applies in every family relationship.

A mother saw in her daughter's life the opportunity to witness the fulfillment of her own lost dreams. She tried to shape the girl's thinking and to manipulate the opportunities that came to her child. She made her daughter little more than a pawn, showing no honest respect for the one entrusted to her care. Relatives and friends were not surprised to find that in time the mother's possessiveness destroyed every trace of filial love.

Many people do not understand that whenever they say, or imply, "You are mine. Do what I say because I love you," they throw cold water on the flame of affection. The more they demand, the more they shatter whatever love exists.

Avoid any attempt to use the fact that someone loves you as an excuse to pry from him some advantage for yourself. Respect the longings of each member of your family. Even a small child has rights, and an aged man or woman has his. Mutual consideration is the only foundation upon which you can build a relationship that will bring continued understanding, peace, and contentment.

This applies to friendships, also. The desire to give what your friend needs, to gladly respond to his longing for assistance or emotional support, should not be blocked by acute self-centeredness. You become increasingly lovable as you grow more spontaneous in your concern and outreach toward all with whom you associate.



GENUINE LOVE SETS US FREE

"Let love be genuine," pleaded the apostle Paul. "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (Romans 12:9 & Colossians 3:12-14)

Genuine love creates an atmosphere in which harmony can prevail. On the other hand, love that is motivated by personal desire breeds tension. This occurs whenever the person in authority insists upon having his own way, even if he claims that his plans provide the greatest good.

Domineering parents who, in the name of "love", put unreasonable restrictions upon their children, stir up revolt. But a mother or father who tempers discipline with patience and understanding wipes out hostility.

Genuine love should help us to know when firm regulations are necessary and when choices should be offered. Children soon learn to respond to justice and praise when these are administered with reason and with a love that seeks not personal gratification, but the welfare of all.

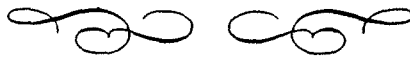
If a marriage is to be successful both parties must submerge the impulse to dominate. Neither the husband nor the wife should attempt to shape the other to fit his own ideal. Such efforts stem from self-interest, although the reformer often claims, "I am telling you this for your own good." Nagging is of no use. Each person needs some measure of freedom. Genuine love will inspire mutual respect and cooperation.

This is true not only in intimate relationships, but in all social contacts. Business firms have built up a sense of loyalty when they allowed their workers to feel that the tasks they performed, however humble, contributed to the total efficiency of the organization.

Large companies which have made it possible for employees to purchase company stock, so each one felt he was not only a servant but a part-owner, have found that as individuals were led to believe that every one's labor was important, the whole organization prospered.

One of the cardinal principles of American life has been that democracy fosters initiative. It encourages men to give of their best and so the level of life in the family, the community, the state and the nation is gradually raised.

But whenever a man becomes obsessed with his own importance, he crushes those who stand in his way. In national and international affairs the stage is set for disaster whenever the party in control poses as a benefactor, while really seeking selfish ends. Look across the world and you will see that wherever a sham of paternalism is substituted for honest concern, anarchy threatens to appear. In all human relations genuine love is necessary if harmony is to prevail and each individual is to have some measure of freedom.



LOVE WARPED BY INDULGENCE MAKES MEN SHIFTLESS

We warned of the danger of using harsh measures in the name of love. It is of equal importance for governments, teachers, and parents to be cautious lest they stunt the growth of personality by making life too easy for their dependents. We have seen how men who were on relief frequently became shiftless. It is quite evident that to give a man or woman the opportunity to work is far kinder than to

give him a dole.

One test of our parental love is the way in which we handle our family finances. It may take less effort to liberally hand out money to our children, and to grant their requests for toys and new clothes, than it is to convince them that they are asking for too much. But indulgence indicates that we prefer to do what is easiest for us, rather than what is best for them.

It is urgent for us to prepare boys and girls for adult life by encouraging them to have consideration for all who are less privileged. We should teach our youth to be sensitive to the needs and longings of others and to find joy in giving and in self-sacrifice.

Parents are wise to ask themselves: "Are we handling the family income in such a way that our children are learning the satisfactions that come from giving, as well as the satisfactions that come from getting?" This might well be followed by another question of equal importance: "Do we treat misbehavior in the way that is easiest for us, or in the way that is best for our children?"

The father who makes excuses for his son when he gets into trouble simply postpones the day when the boy will have to face up to the consequences of wrongdoing. The mother who coddles her daughter, and who encourages her to believe that clothes and "hair-do" are more important than helpfulness, is weakening her child by pampering.

Our public schools struggle to discipline children who have been overindulged. Our juvenile courts are crowded with the sons and daughters of those who failed to teach their children either to share the work of the family or to accept the responsibility for their own failures. It is not kind to shield our children from hardship. Love warped by indulgence is far removed from Christ-like love.

"Momism" is the name some psychiatrists give to a self-effacing spirit on the part of one who is shaping the minds of youth. There is evidence that when a mother tries to entirely give up her own life, becoming a slave to her children, she weakens their character.

When Professor Edward A. Strecker made an extensive study of emotional crack-ups among army men, he came to the conclusion that "momism" was the cause of a large percentage of them. He also became convinced that three-fourths of the cases of alcoholism had as an underlying cause the thought-patterns set in childhood by those who failed to help their children face up to responsibilities. Studies carried on in his own private practice, supplementing those made for the army, confirmed Strecker's suspicion that the sheltering of young people curtails their preparation for adult life.

Parents are not the only ones who weaken the moral fiber of youth by continual indulgence. Grandfathers and grandmothers are frequently guilty of this practice. Teachers sometimes excuse and condone, when severe criticism and challenge would be more beneficial.

Don't deprive growing boys and girls of the privilege of doing things for themselves. The mother who permits her children to make mistakes, even when they may be hurt by their efforts, is showing a higher type of love than the mother

who always protects them from contact with temptation or hardship. The father who makes his son do certain chores, even if he can hire a man to do them, is building in his child a sense of cooperation. The teacher who insists that assignments be up to the school's standards, and that they be completed on time, is showing kindness motivated by intelligent concern.

Always remember that young people easily distinguish between sincerity and pretense. They are inclined to do their part when they know adults are relying upon them. Loyalty is deepened when boys and girls see that their services are needed.

If you would test the quality of your love, ask yourself whether you are motivated by self-interest, or by willingness to make personal sacrifices for the good of those who are dear to you. Are you giving your children or other members of your household only material gifts, and encouraging their dependence upon you, or are you giving them opportunities to develop initiative and self-confidence?



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LOVE IS "BLIND"?

You are familiar with the proverb LOVE IS BLIND. Perhaps it brings to your mind the picture of a young man who sees perfection in the girl whom he adores. Others notice that she has freckles, but he sees only the light in her eyes. Others think that she is not well informed and has little of interest to say, but he finds her company delightful as she listens attentively and responds with a smile.

Whether we are young or old, romantic or practical-minded, we would like to be the recipients of this kind of love. We find the encouragement to be our best selves when those with whom we live overlook our shortcomings and praise our good qualities.

Most of us struggle to overcome a feeling of inadequacy. We wonder if we are able to cope with the many demands that are made upon us. We feel unequal to the challenge of our tasks. We worry over the threat of economic insecurity, the danger of ill health, or the prospect of losing the one upon whom we have depended.

We learned in the previous Lesson that when we become aware of the sustaining presence of God and accept the Divine Love and Power that our Heavenly Father is offering to us, much of our fear and uncertainty vanishes. Human love that is blind to our frailties can also play a part in bringing us security as well as happiness.

O. Henry, in his deeply touching story "The Gift of the Magi", pictured a young couple who were poverty-stricken, but whose dingy flat was brightened by this "blind" love of which we have been speaking. To the world Jim was just a common young man, with an insignificant job. But in the eyes of Della he was a hero. When Christmas came, and she had no money, Della sold her beautiful braids

of hair so she could buy a platinum fob and chain for her husband's pocket watch, the only thing of any value he had inherited from his father. On the same day Jim, knowing how proud his young wife was of her hair, sold his watch to buy a set of jewelled combs which he had seen Della admiring in a store window.

With pathos, O. Henry pictures the sacrifices that were prompted by the "blind" love of this young husband and wife. He makes us see the couple standing in their barren flat as they open their gifts. We share their tears, but realize that their love is the most precious thing in all the world.

Love that is blind to another's weaknesses can turn a drab apartment into a home that offers comfort and encouragement. But if a person lets self-love dominate his life he sees only how those who live under his roof can fulfill his wishes. Then he becomes critical, magnifying the faults of the members of the family.

When a home lacks the spirit of tolerance and spontaneous forgiveness there can be no sense of well-being and peace. On the other hand, poverty and hardships can be borne bravely when a person walks hand in hand with one who appreciates his efforts.

Robert Frost wrote: "Love has to be blinding to make things right."

Did he not mean that when mistakes have been made we need hearts so full of love for the person who made them that we are willing to forget the offenses? And when misunderstandings have arisen, the differences can be surmounted when we have a love that prompts us to overlook the other person's blunders, but not our own?

How many homes would be happier if this kind of love were shown! How many people could work more efficiently if they would wipe out animosity! The mind that refuses to dwell upon another's weaknesses can do this.

You may ask, "Isn't it unreasonable to think that we can be kind when those with whom we live or work are thoughtless and cruel?"

The only possible answer is: Reason might ask for a balance sheet, but Christian love is not calculating. It is extravagant. It is generous beyond all measure.

An awareness that God has given much to us, above and beyond what we deserve, will prompt us to give those we meet much more than justice. It will enable us to find the wisdom that is greater than logic, and the joy that is more satisfying than prudence.

Jesus exemplified this kind of love. When He met a woman who had fallen so low that she was despised by all in her village, He looked into her eyes and saw the person she might become. The Master treated her with courtesy and challenged her to become worthy of respect. The Gospel account tells us that the woman responded.

When Jesus met Matthew, a tax-gatherer - one who was scorned because he was in the employ of the hated oppressor - He called him to be a disciple, and Matthew became a new man. When Peter denied that he ever knew the man who was on

trial, he was called back to his nobler self by the knowledge that his Lord was depending upon him.

Some of the followers of Christ have shown unbounded love not only for their families and friends, but for those whose only claim upon them was their desperate plight. They have risked their lives to bring healing to the sick and hope to the dying.

"Blind" love makes us oblivious to obstacles, hardships, and personal suffering. It is the force that keeps the research worker at his microscope until long after midnight, and keeps a missionary at the bedside of the sick even when the crowds shout, "Jungle doctor, go home." It is the power that enables us to make tremendous sacrifices without flinching, or complaint.

Love that goes beyond all measure is the driving force in the lives of saints and heroes. It is also the quality that lifts common, every-day living out of the ruts of drabness, or frustration.



LOVE GENEROUSLY - LIVE EXPANSIVELY

As a Perfectionist you well know that it is not ease or comfort that you are seeking, but a life overflowing with joy and deep contentment. Therefore, never be like the miser who takes more satisfaction in counting his money than he does in spending it. His life is cramped. His satisfactions are meager.

Likewise, never bury your love, nor coldly count how much of your concern and affection others deserve. Love with joyous abandon and you will receive much in return.

The Master said: "Give, and it will be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:38)

While this teaching has been applied to our need to be honest in business, and to be liberal with our money, we should not forget that it followed Christ's instruction for us to hesitate before we make judgements, and to be quick to forgive.

Be patient and kind to your immediate family. Let your unmeasured love surround each one, bringing security when they are timid or frightened, and healing when they are wounded.

Be extravagant in your expressions of love for your friends. Unexpected words of appreciation, and tokens of concern that come as a surprise to them, will brighten the dreariest day.

Live expansively, giving far and wide. You will discover that when you push back horizons and widen the circle of those for whom you care, your joys are multiplied.

When you pour out your love with gay abandon you are winsome. You acquire an indefinable charm and become more and more lovable. Family and friends take increasing delight in your company. Then your deep longing for human understanding and love is satisfied. You experience an ecstasy that is never even dreamed of by those who give only what can be reasonably expected of them.



AFFIRMATION

I will not calculate the worthiness, but will
see the needs of those whom I meet this day.
Then I will respond with wisdom and love,
bringing joy to them and untold satisfaction
to myself.

Blessings,

YOUR INSTRUCTOR.